

Implementing the Gulf Regional Sediment Management Master Plan

...responding to an ongoing
emergency, improving responses
to new emergencies



Regional Ocean Governance Context

- GRSMMP advanced over the last 3-4 years as a product of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance
- GOMA is a State-led effort to develop regional ocean governance structure promoted by the US Ocean Action Plan, initiated in 2004
- GRSMMP is a technical work product of the “Habitat Conservation & Restoration Team” of the Alliance

Ecological Context – the “ongoing emergency”

- Recent data indicates Gulf of Mexico coastal wetland loss averaging ~60K acres (~94 sq. miles) annually, compared to net gains reported nationally
 - Geomorphic characteristics of the western Gulf account for a large part of this instability
 - RSM concepts such as beneficial use are critical to addressing ongoing loss of ecosystem services
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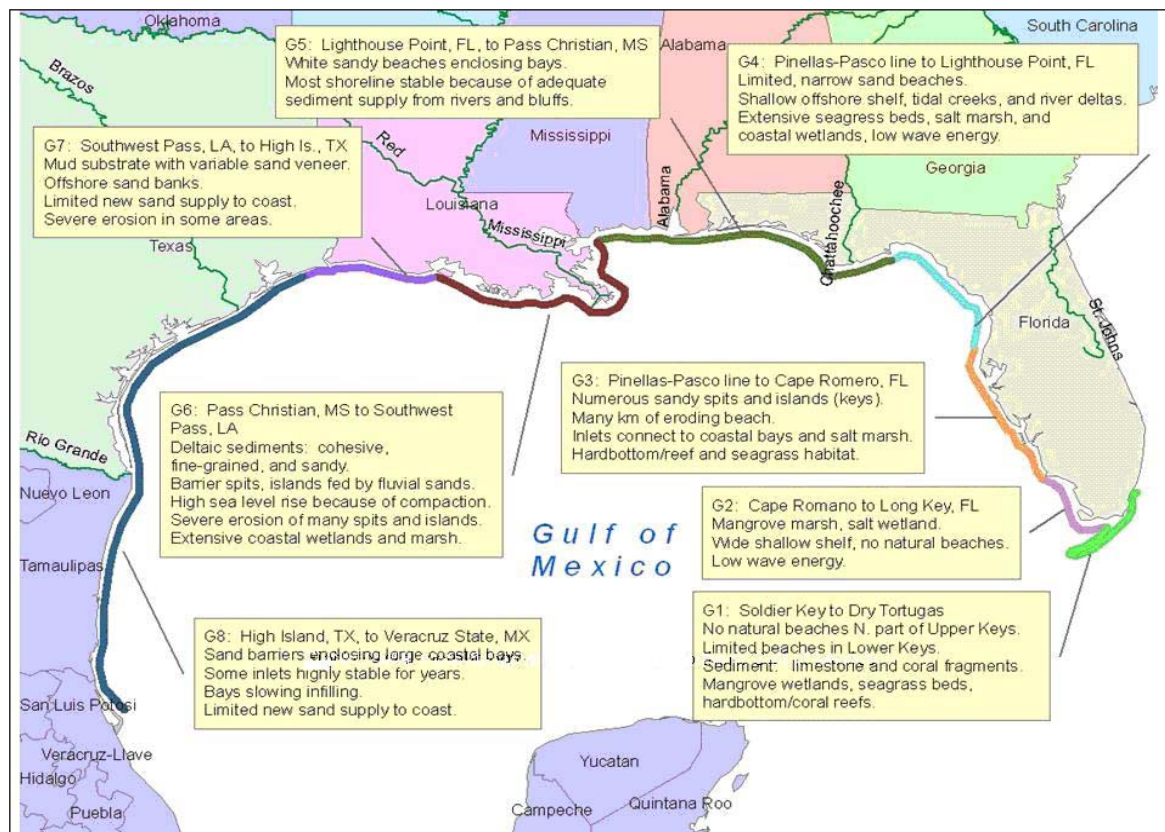


Figure 2-3. The eight geomorphic regions classified for the Gulf of Mexico.

Purpose of the Plan

- Understand sediment dynamics (inputs, outputs, movement) to manage sediment resources to accomplish environmental restoration, conservation, and preservation, while reducing coastal erosion and coastal storm damages and associated costs of sediment management.
- Link sources of sediment with sediment needs, provide a basis for assessing competing needs for sediment, and provide regional strategies for sediment management that:
 - make more effective use of sediment from inlets, navigation channels and other sources in support of environmental and economic objectives;
 - coordinate the collection and dissemination of data about the movement of sediment to better integrate the understanding of regional sediment process into planning, management and other decisions; and
 - facilitate cooperation among states, federal agencies, and other stakeholders in sediment management.

Goals of the Plan

- Understand sediment dynamics, better manage sediment resources in the region (sources, movement, sinks, watershed and coastal processes, structures and actions affecting movement, use, and loss).
- Inventory sediment resources and needs.
- Use BMPs in managing sediment resources and minimize secondary adverse impacts.
- Inform projects and activities involving sediment, assist in prioritizing uses of sediment resources.
- Develop regulatory and policy processes that weigh environmental considerations equally with other costs and benefits;
- Improve regulatory processes for consideration of beneficial uses for existing projects
- Leverage resources for related programs and projects
- Facilitate effective sediment management in systems that cross political boundaries.
- Increase stakeholder participation in development and implementation of sediment management strategies.
- Promote information exchange about regional sediment resources and management needs.
- Engage Port Authorities in RSM planning & implementation.
- Support resiliency goals and objectives.

Focus Areas of the Plan

- Ecological Considerations
 - Relocating sediments for restoration
 - Restoration sediment needs
 - Direct and indirect effects, conflicts, and synergies
 - Sediment Resources
 - Sediment Inventories
 - Sediment Budgets
 - Dredging Activities
 - Data & Information Management
 - Policies, Authorities, & Funding
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Current Status

- Content and recommendations still in development
- Dredging information provided by the four Gulf Coast districts is compiled at the following website:
<http://rsm.sam.usace.army.mil/projects/index.asp>
- Next team workshop May 13-14, New Orleans, LA

Dredging Database

- Project name and location
- Volume of sediment typically dredged
- Nature of sediment (sand, silt, clay, etc.)
- Associated disposal areas
- Typical dredging schedule
- Beneficial uses

What's Missing

- More information about beneficial uses, beach nourishment projects
- Sources and volumes of material
- Dredging windows
- Contaminant information
- Shoreline restoration activities
- Links to survey data
- Private dredging activities.

Policy Recommendations for Short-Term Implementation

- Better Coordination & Communication (ICTs, BUGs, etc)
- Flexibility in the Federal Standard- policy adjustment to rethink least cost alternative.
 - Recommended change to the rules under which the Corps operates.
 - Incorporated ecosystem benefits & services into cost/benefit analyses.
 - Language that means something to project managers and is consistently applied across the Gulf.
 - Addresses inconsistencies between and within districts on how the standard is implemented.
 - Needs to come from the states, COE cannot lobby.
 - Need Port Authorities in the mix.
 - States need to push for flexibility in the standard as well as for additional funding to the COE to support ongoing RSM/BU implementation, especially during O&M.

Longer-term Policy Recommendations

- Submerged lands ownership issues
- Funding of COE continuing authorities
 - New projects should be made multi-purpose (navigation & restoration) and build beneficial use/restoration into the projects.
 - Adjust cost sharing
- Additional team members (MS & FL, DOI, Ports)
- Information Management Support
- Identify and gather state authorities & policies, NOAA legislative atlas-includes state and federal
- Compare and contrast state & federal policies and authorities
- Identify specific changes to permitting processes and better facilitate beneficial use for habitat restoration/conservation

Significance for NDT

- Ultimate goal of applying RSM concepts and recommendations to all dredging operations in the region will require support of O&M divisions, Port Authorities in each district
- Overcoming inertia of least-cost alternatives using CDFs or ODMDs, for the purpose of responding ongoing to habitat loss emergency condition, requires fundamental policy & funding shifts
- Current responses to new emergencies tend to reinforce that inertia (dredging after storms, using existing, pre-approved placement sites); emergency responses that beneficially use all dredged material in the region require plans, funding, and authorities to be in place in advance